

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 IO-03 NSC-07 NSCE-00 PM-03 L-02

SP-02 CIAE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01 PRS-01 DODE-00

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R 151623Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2096

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 08830

LIMDIS

BEIRUT ALSO PASS DAMASCUS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, SY, UK

SUBJECT: STRAIN IN BRITISH-SYRIAN RELATIONS

REF: DAMASCUS 1397

1. ACCORDING TO CRAIG AND OTHER FCO OFFICIALS BRITISH FELT IMPELLED TO EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT PLIGHT OF JEWS IN SYRIA DUE TO HEAVY PARLIAMENTARY AND PRESS CAMPAIGN OF LAST FEW MONTHS. CRAIG MADE APPROACH TO SYRIAN AMBASSADOR OMRAN JULY 3 ON FONSEC CALLAGHAN'S DIRECT INSTRUCTIONS. SPECIAL EFFORT WAS MADE TO PLAY IT DOWN BY DOING IT IN COURSE OF A LUNCH AND BY PUTTING IT IN TERMS OF CONCERN OF BRITISH PEOPLE (NOT SPECIFICALLY OF BRITISH GOVERNMENT).

2. CRAIG SAYS OMRAN IMMEDIATELY REACTED WITH UNEXPECTED VIGOR. HE SAID THERE WAS NO GETTING AROUND FACT THIS WAS UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF AN-
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OTHER STATE, AND HE WOULD REPORT IT AS SUCH. BRITISH

WERE CONSEQUENTLY NOT SURPRISED TO SEE STRONG LINE RE-
PLAYED IN DAMASCUS.

3. BRITISH HOPE SYRIAN REACTION WILL STOP THERE. FCO
OFFICIALS EXPRESS CONCERN THAT SYRIA MAY BE GETTING CUMU-
LATIVE IMPRESSION OF PRO-ISRAELI BIAS IN PRESENT BRITISH
GOVERNMENT -- AS SYRIANS REPORTEDLY "HINTED" ACCORDING
TO FCO DESK OFFICER. WHILE FCO OFFICIALS CONSIDER AM-
BASSADOR OMRAN VERY ABLE, IT WOULD APPEAR TO US THAT HIS
INITIAL REACTION TO CRAIG DID NOT HELP MATTERS. OUR FCO
INTERLOCUTORS WERE INTERESTED IN EMBASSY DAMASCUS'
THOUGHT (REFTEL) THAT EXPRESSING SUCH CONCERN WITH AP-
PROPRIATE OFFICIALS IN SYRIA RATHER THAN IN LONDON MAY IN
LONG RUN BE LESS DISRUPTIVE OF RELATIONSHIPS AND PERHAPS
MORE PRODUCTIVE OF RESULTS. WE HOPE RPT HOPE THAT UN-
EXPECTEDLY SHARP BLAST FROM SYRIANS WILL NOT INHIBIT
BRITISH IN MAKING MORE EFFECTIVE EFFORTS IN THE FUTURE --
PERHAPS USING A LESS BLUNT INSTRUMENT.

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